



Bring down barriers: Testimonials for In-Work Support



The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

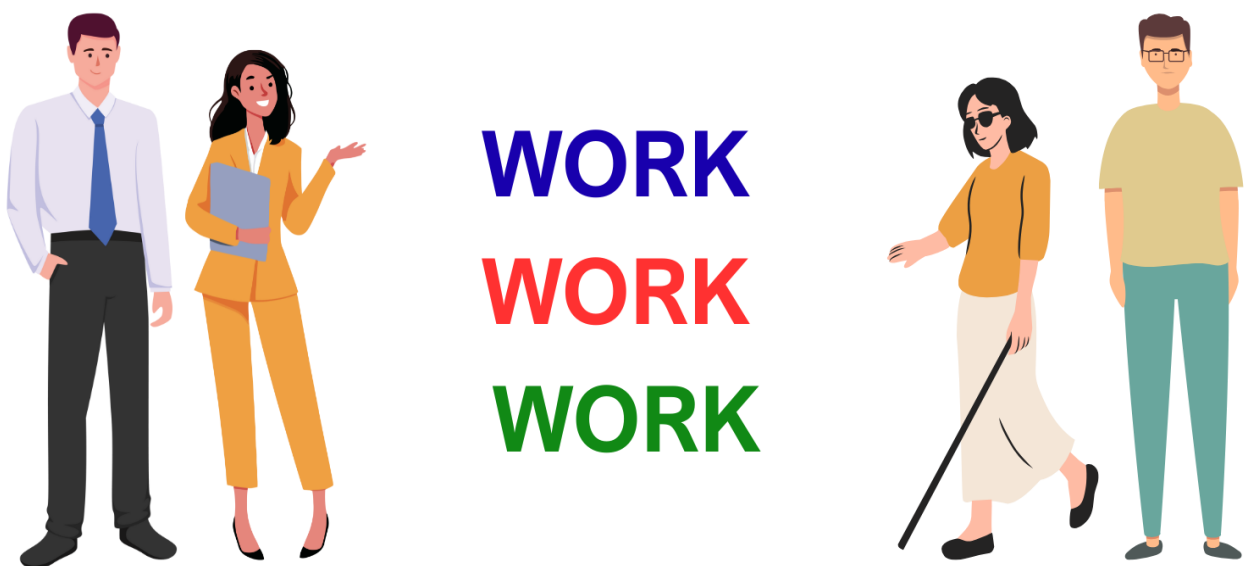
Introduction

EU Institutions, National Authorities and private companies efforts to help improve our community' access to the labour market are still not enough. The gap between the unemployment rates of the general population and visually impaired people in Europe is a worrying reality which calls for further action.

Overall, prejudices, lack of knowledge and unwillingness to invest in reasonable accommodation are some of the reasons behind this.

However, don't feel discouraged; although barriers are always present in our community's access to the labour market, we can be as efficient and successful as our sighted peers.

Conceived as an awareness-raising tool, this In-Work support brochure provides you with testimonials of persons with visual impairment who would like to share some of their lived experiences and show that we can work proficiently on an equal basis with others with the adequate help.



Anja Uršič (Slovenia), External Contractor Culture & People Experience at Novartis Slovenia

“As a visually impaired person working at Novartis Slovenia, my integration has been very positive. From the job interview, my leader asked what I needed for an inclusive experience and continued to support me by introducing me to colleagues and encouraging open discussion about my disability.

He provided patience and understanding, never pressuring me. Colleagues assist by accompanying me to meetings, helping with visual materials, and making the environment accessible (e.g., contrast stickers on glass doors, elevator announcements).

My advice to employers: be open and give visually impaired employees the chance to realize their potential.”



Paweł Masarczyk (Poland), Accessibility and Experience Expert at WIENFLUSS Information. Design. Solutions (Austria)

“When choosing tools, their screen reader compatibility is prioritized where possible. My colleagues have taken part in an awareness-raising training organised by the local blindness organisation to better understand how they can be of assistance to me.

However, for certain tools, such as project and task planning, the accessible alternatives are scarce. It also turns out that a blind person cannot verify all aspects of digital accessibility, such as colour contrast or text spacing.

Our voices should be heard at the critical stages of product development applying the design for all concept, especially as our lived experience can be a valuable source of feedback. Here's to hoping this will change in the future.”



Madeleine Mc Namara (Ireland), Advocacy and Engagement Administrator at Vision Ireland

“As I have been blind since birth, I know what accommodations I need which is helpful.

My current employer is Vision Ireland who provide services to people who are blind or partially sighted, they therefore understand the challenges I face.

Before starting my job I was asked what assistive technology I would require. The ZoomText software I requested was installed on my computer before I started work. In my first week a workplace assessment was carried out to see if I needed anything else.”



Loredana Dicsi (Romania), Membership, Internal Communication and Youth Coordinator at the European Disability Forum

“In my first job 15 years ago back in my homeland, I didn’t have access to assistive technology.

Nowadays, fortunately, I’ve been provided with a screen reader, Braille display text recognition software and a Daisy Player. At the workplace, I am involved in verifying the correct functioning of my working tools and braille is included in the check-in/check-out system and in lift buttons.

I want to advise all visually impaired peers to not underestimate your value and be open to your colleagues, help in bringing forward solutions.”



Accessibility. Equality. Inclusion.

Galina Krasteva (Bulgaria), Document Accessibility Expert in the Quality Control and Accessibility Service in DG ITEC in the European Parliament

“Throughout my career I encountered employers’ hesitation—some were unsure how to work with a blind person, while others called me “overqualified” because of my doctoral degree. Interviews often shifted between discomfort and admiration for my independence.

Today I work as a Digital Accessibility Expert with the European Parliament’s DG ITEC, using a braille display and screen reader every day and supported by welcoming, open-minded colleagues.

My advice to blind jobseekers emphasizes how your disability sharpens focus and skills, mention it confidently in your cover letter, and present it as a strength, never a limitation.”



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